

will be performed once road design has progressed to a point that wetland impacts can be accurately assessed. The observation and documentation of wetland characteristics will be performed on a site-specific basis utilizing methods defined in the 1987 Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual.

The Iowa DOT will avoid, minimize and, if necessary, compensate for wetland impacts caused by road construction. Several sites have been identified for compensatory wetland mitigation and the Iowa DOT will pursue a mitigation plan that compensates for unavoidable wetland impacts.

## **PARKS, RECREATION AND WILDLIFE AREAS**

Two parks, the Ashton Roadside Park and Historic Marker and the Ashton Wayside Park, both located within the Ashton city limits, are located on the west and east sides of Iowa 60, respectively. Neither park will be impacted due to the bypass alternatives.

Ashton Pits Wildlife Area is located approximately 0.3 mile east of the city of Ashton. The area is approximately 33 acres in size and is owned by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Ashton Pits is managed and maintained by the Osceola County Conservation Board, which has created wildlife habitat, native grasses and shrub plantings, and recreational trails in the area. The area is primarily used for hunting and fishing, as well as some primitive camping. This area gets regular use throughout the hunting and fishing seasons. Facilities include a parking area and an access road.

Approximately 1.88 acres will be acquired from the western corner of this property for the roadway. The Iowa DNR has agreed that this wildlife area is not an irreplaceable natural resource area. For the purpose of Section 4(f), this wording satisfies the “no significance” clause in classifying this resource. Therefore, No Section 4(f) Statement is necessary for the encroachment of the resource. Mitigation for the loss of this portion of the property has been agreed to in the attached Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signed June 14, 2002 (Appendix D). This MOA has been signed by Iowa DNR and Iowa DOT and sets forth the procedures in mitigating this property.

The Ashton Pits received Pittman-Robertson funds for improvements to the facility. Therefore, DNR must coordinate with the USFWS. Coordination on this matter to date appears in Appendix D. During on-going coordination with Iowa DNR, it was determined that there is no Section 6(f) involvement at Ashton Pits.

The Ed Winkel Memorial Trail, located within the Sibley Bypass, is owned and managed by the Osceola County Conservation Board (Plate 10). This trail runs approximately 5 miles between Sibley and Allendorf. The trail is used by pedestrians and bicyclists in the summer, as well as having some equestrian use. Cross-country skiing and snow mobiling are the major uses throughout the winter months. In the winter, the trail is groomed by a snow-mobile groomer. Facilities along this trail include a deck area with two resting benches. Native prairie species grow on both sides of the trail, providing diversity to the area.

The trail is located on a former rail line/railroad right-of-way that is rail banked. Therefore, the county has interim use of the line for the trail. There is interest by local rail enthusiasts to restore rail service at this location. If rail service is returned to this rail-banked line, it would then occupy the present public trail in its entirety. Under these circumstances, FHWA agreed that the trail is not a protected property as described in 23 CFR Section 771.135 Section 4(f). Therefore, no Section 4(f) Statement is warranted (see correspondence in Appendix E).